



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

San Diego Public Library

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CULMINATING EVENT FOR REFUGEE VOICES AND CHANGING FACE OF SAN DIEGO

San Diego, CA... The City of San Diego Public Library, The Media Arts Center San Diego, International Rescue Committee, New Americans Immigration Museum and Learning Center, and the Mo'olelo Performing Arts Company will host the Culminating event for *Refugee Voices* and the *Changing Face of San Diego* at the City Heights /Weingart Library and Performance Annex located at 3795 Fairmount Avenue on Tuesday, June 19th at 6:00pm. This event is FREE to the public.

The City of San Diego Public Library received two grants totaling more than \$71,303 to produce two unique programs for the public. Both grants were through the Federal Library Services and Technology Act, administered by the California State Library (LSTA). LSTA grants allowed the library to produce projects that involved the Refugee/Immigrant communities and enriched their lives. Because of the tremendous growth in immigration in San Diego, the two grants for which SDPL received were timely and important to the community.

"The Changing Face of San Diego" targeted port-of-entry immigrants/refugees who are negotiating immersion in a new environment while striving to retain a sense of cultural heritage and identify, as well as the immigrant population that has resided in San Diego for a longer period. Partners in the program include the International Rescue Committee (IRC), New Americans Immigration Museum and Learning Center (NAIMLC), and the Mo'olelo Performing Arts Company.

Librarians created an Outreach Services/New American Immigrants section on the Library's homepage to demonstrate to refugees/immigrants how to connect to the larger pluralistic society and to the resources that will help them acculturate in their new environment. The IRC and NAIMLC linked to the Library's site and each other's homepages enabling refugees/immigrants to obtain information on the Library's resources as well as citizenship classes, cultural events, job training, literacy programs and available social services. Mo'olelo Performing Arts Company offered an after school theater education program called "My Home," in which 21 refugee youth participated. The curriculum designed by the theater company created ways of understanding and interpreting life through words, and gave the youth insight into themselves, both through engagement with someone else's text and through their own production of a text.

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“Refugee Voices” addresses issues faced by the City’s Sub-Saharan African populations through programs at the Central Library, City Heights Branch Library, and Malcolm X Branch Library. Refugee teens need English-as-a-second-language materials, extra curricular activities, and cultural integration, and adults need access to information to English-as-a-second language material, healthcare, employment and citizenship. The aim of the program was to attract both youth and adults, and educate this community as to the important resources available to them at the libraries.

Media Arts Center of San Diego Teen Producers Project, in partnership with the City of San Diego Public Library launched *Refugee Voices II* a project designed to document and preserve local East African stories. *Refugee Voices II* was a 15-week after-school video production, education and training program where local San Diego youth researched and produced a 15 minute short documentary.

Refugee Voices II is a continuation of the former program known as *Refugee Voices: Life Histories of Somali and Ethiopian Women* that produced a video documenting the life histories of three Somali and Ethiopian women, giving them the opportunity to share their stories. *Refugee Voices II* continued to raise awareness about the African refugee experience, to help promote cultural understanding and to dismantle existing prejudices. Youth-producers documented personal life experiences and events that were used as a lens for exploring changing cultural, religious, political and economic realities that shape the lives of refugees now living in San Diego. The project gave voice to featured participants and provided instructive models for leadership, community building, and civic engagement. Youth documentation of residents’ life histories strengthens communities by re-building intergenerational ties, training future leaders, preserving life stories, and offers a model to help other communities’ maintain their cultural survival.

The culminating event will highlight events from both projects. “The Library is committed to providing excellent educational, cultural and recreational programming for citizens,” said City Library Director Anna Tatár. “These important grants allowed the San Diego Public Library to better connect with the San Diego community.

For more information, call the Central Library at 619-236-5800 or visit the San Diego Public Library at www.sandiegolibrary.org.

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